

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DACCA 05860 261924Z

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T DACCA 5860

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, IN, BG

SUBJ: TOP LEVEL BANGLADESH EXPRESSION OF GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION

1. SUMMARY. FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLED ME IN TONIGHT FOR DISCUSSION, ESPECIALLY WITH MLA'S KEY FIGURE, GENERAL ZIA, ON BDG'S CONCERN THAT INDIA PREPARING TO MOVE SOON INTO BANGLADESH. THEY REQUESTED GREATEST PRESSURE BE BROUGHT ON GOI TO DRAW BACK FROM ITS PROPAGANDA AND PRESUMED MILITARY INTENTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN CALLED ME AT HOME AT 2000 HOURS AND ASKED ME TO COME AT ONCE TO THE PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE FOR A REVIEW OF TODAY'S DEVELOPMENTS. UPON MY ARRIVAL, HE OPENED WITH THE STATEMENT THAT TODAY'S SITUATION MAY HAVE BEEN MOMENTARILY DEFUSED BY HIS SUCCESSFUL PERSUASION OF THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER NOT RPT NOT TO LEAVE DACCA ON THE INDIAN AIRCRAFT THAT WAS COMING TO TAKE HIM BACK TO INDIA FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT. TABARAK SAID THAT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE INJURY WAS NOT SUCH AS TO REQUIRE SEN'S EVACUATION AND THE LOCAL DOCTORS HAD THE CASE WELL IN HAND. HE SAID THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S DEPARTURE UNDER TODAY'S DRAMATIC CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD ONLY FURTHER HEAT UP THE EXISTING SITUATION WHEREAS HIS AGREEMENT TO REMAIN WOULD HELP COOL

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 DACCA 05860 261924Z

IT DOWN. ACCORDING TO TABARAK, THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

AGREED AND THE INDIAN AIRCRAFT WAS TURNED AROUND WITHOUT LANDING IN DACCA. HE ADDED THAT SEN WOULD, IN FACT, PROBABLY BE RELEASED FROM THE HOSPITAL TOMORROW.

3. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT WAS STILL PROFOUNDLY DISTURBED BY THE INDIAN ACTIVITIES ON THE GROUND, BOTH WITHIN BANGLADESH AND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BORDER, AS WELL AS IN THE PRESS. HE THEN CALLED IN GENERAL ZIAUR RAHMAN AND COMMODORE KHAN WHO HE SAID WANTED TO PURSUE THE DISCUSSION WITH ME IN GREATER DETAIL.

4. AFTER ASKING ME FOR MY ASSESSMENT, IN WHICH I CANDIDLY ADMITTED AN INABILITY TO FULL COMPREHEND THE LOGIC BEHIND THIS DETERIORATING SITUATION, ZIA SAID THAT IT COULD ONLY BE EXPLAINED IN TERMS OF INDIA'S DESIRE TO FORCE SUCH INSTABILITY AS TO BRING INTO POWER A GOVERNMENT COMPLETELY UNDER ITS CONTROL.

5. ZIA SAID THAT THEY HAD WATCHED THE INDIAN PRESS HEAT UP, AND THAT THEY HAD EVIDENCE OF MILITARY MOVEMENTS ON THE BORDER, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TRAINING CAMPS AND EVEN REFUGEE CAMPS IN MANY OF THE SAME LOCATIONS USED IN 1971, AND THE MOVEMENT OF CIVILIAN PERSONNEL INTENDED TO ENCOURAGE AN EXODUS OF HINDUS FROM BANGLADESH INTO INDIA. HE SAID THE MILITARY MOVEMENTS DID NOT NECESSARILY REQUIRE LARGE UNITS AS MANY OF THOSE WERE ALREADY CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE BORDER TO MAKE THEIR MOVES IN A VERY SHORT TIME. HE SAID THE SMALLER UNITS WERE BATTALION OR BRIGADES, AND HE SPOKE OF THE INFILTRATION OF ARMS AS WELL AS THE REORGANIZATION OF SPECIAL FORCES WHICH HAD BEEN USED IN SIKKIM. HE SAID THAT RUMORS HAD BEEN CIRCULATED FROM THE INDIAN SIDE FOR TEN DAYS, THAT SOMETHING WAS GOING TO HAPPEN IN BANGLADESH AROUND NOVEMBER 27-28 OR AROUND DECEMBER 7. IN THIS CONTEXT HE FELT THAT TODAY'S INCIDENT AT THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION'S COMPOUND WAS NO COINCIDENCE. HE ALLEGED THAT THE TWO MEN APPREHENDED TODAY WERE MEMBERS OF THE JSD, AN ORGANIZATION WHICH ZIA SAID HAS BEEN RECEIVING CONSIDERABLE AMOUNTS OF MONEY FROM THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND INDEED DIRECTLY FROM THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION HERE IN DACCA.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 DACCA 05860 261924Z

6. ZIA AND KHAN ECHOED THE FOREIGN SECRETARY'S REMARKS ON MONDAY THAT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE FOR THE ALLEGATIONS FROM THE INDIAN SIDE ABOUT THE COMMUNAL TROUBLES OR SIGNIFICANT HINDU REFUGEE MOVEMENTS. THEY WERE TAKING MEASURES TO ASSURE AGAINST SUCH DEVELOPMENTS, BUT NOTED THAT OVERLY ANXIOUS SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS COULD IN THEMSELVES FUEL ANY FEARS. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THEY HAD DECIDED

TODAY TO LET FOREIGN JOURNALISTS COME TO BANGLADESH IMMEDIATELY TO SEE THE SITUATION FOR THEMSELVES AND TO CONVEY THE TRUE PICTURE TO THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS. ALL THREE OFFICIALS AGREED THAT THEY ERRED IN NOT DOING SO SOONER. HE HOPED THIS DECISION WAS NOT TOO LATE.

7. TO MY QUESTIONS HOW TO EXPLAIN INDIA'S ACTIONS, ZIA SAID THAT HE FELT THAT THE INDIAN ARMY, SWOLLEN AND HUNGRY FOR INFLUENCE, WAS EXERTING PRESSURE ON THE INDIAN POLITICAL SIDE. HE SAID THAT HE EXPECTS THEM TO MOVE VERY SOON, EVEN POSSIBLY IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

8. ZIA CONCLUDED THAT THIS SITUATION REQUIRED THAT IMMEDIATE AND ENORMOUS PRESSURE BE BROUGHT ON INDIA NOT TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH THIS MADNESS. HE SAID THAT THEY SHOULD BE MADE TO REALIZE THAT THIS IS NOT 1971. THIS IS 1975 AND THEY WILL FIND A MILITARY FORCE OF SIXTY THOUSAND AND A POPULATION OF SEVENTY-FIVE MILLION THAT WILL PRESENT ENORMOUS PROBLEMS FOR THEM. TRYING TO RATIONALIZE SUCH AN EVENTUALITY FURTHER IN MILITARY TERMS, HE SAID THAT HE ASSUMES THE INDIAN MILITARY FEELS THEY NEED TO CONTROL AN AREA WHICH STAND BETWEEN THEM AND THEIR EASTERN TERRITORIES. HE INFERS THAT THEY BELIEVE THIS WOULD BE AN EASIER MOVE TO CARRY OFF AT THIS TIME BECAUSE THEY COULD HOLD OFF THE PAKISTANIS, AND THE HIMALAYAN PASSES ARE NOW SNOWBOUND. ZIA'S FINAL POINT WAS THAT ANY SUCH MOVE BY INDIA WOULD GENERATE SUCH TROUBLES AS TO ENGAGE THE INTERESTS OF OTHER WORLD POWERS AND CREATE ENORMOUS DIFFICULTIES FOR EVERYONE.

9. ZIA AND THE FOREIGN SECRETARY REQUESTED THAT I CONVEY THEIR TREMENDOUS ANXIETY IMMEDIATELY, AND PARTICULARLY THEIR REQUEST THAT THE US GOVERNMENT TO BE OF EVERY POSSIBLE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 DACCA 05860 261924Z

ASSISTANCE IN MAKING INDIA REALIZE THAT THIS SITUATION MUST BE COOLED DOWN IMMEDIATELY. WALKING WITH ME TO MY CAR, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID HE WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION IF I CONVEYED THE GENERAL SENSE OF THIS DISCUSSION TO OTHER MISSIONS IN DACCA, SUCH AS THE BRITISH, EVEN THE AUSTRALIANS, IN HOPE THEY COULD ALSO BE OF ASSISTANCE.

10. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO PASS TO LONDON, MOSCOW, PEKING, CANBERRA, CINCPAC, AND OTHER POSTS.
CHESLAW

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